

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8280

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: TORIES AT IT AGAIN

1. IN KEEPING WITH THEIR TRADITION OF INTRA-PARTY FEUDING, THE QUEBEC WING OF THE FEDERAL PROGRESSIVE-CONSERVATIVE PARTY BROUGHT OPEN DISSENTION TO THREE-DAY CONVENTION TO ELECT NEW PRESIDENT.

2. MP CLAUDE WAGNER OPENLY ACCUSED TORY LEADER JOE CLARK OF INTERFERING WITH LOCAL AFFAIRS, "WE DON'T NEED ANYONE (FROM OTTAWA) TO TELL US HOW TO RUN THINGS IN QUEBEC," TO THE DISMAY OF FELLOW DELEGATES. HE ALSO FAILED SHOW UP FOR VICTORY SPEECH BY MP ROCH LASALLE, WHOM CLARK HAD PERSUADED TO RUN. SHOUTING MATCH WITH PRO-CLARK DELEGATES IN HOTEL LOBBY ALSO DID NOTHING TO ENDEAR WAGNER TO OTHER PARTY MEMBERS.

3. LOCAL TORIES EXPRESS HOPE THIS IS END OF LINE FOR WAGNER IN PARTY. THEY POINT OUT THAT CLARK "HAD ALREADY SENT MESSAGE" BY, FIRST, TAKING ON QUEBEC ORGANIZATION PERSONALLY SOME MONTHS AGO RATHER THAN USING WAGNER AS "QUEBEC LIEUTENANT" AS STANFIELD HAD AND, SECOND, BY ACCEPTING (IF NOT INDEED ASKING FOR) WAGNER'S RESIGNATION AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SHADOW CABINET. WAGNER'S INSISTENCE THAT LASALLE'S CANDIDACY AMOUNTED TO CLARK "IMPOSING HIM" ON QUEBEC DREW WRATH NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT WAS SEEN AS DISLOYAL

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TO CLARK BUT ALSO DISLOYAL TO FRIEND (LASALLE) WHO HAD WORKED

FOR SIX MONTHS TRYING TO MAKE WAGNER THE TOP TORY.

4. LATEST INCIDENT SEEN AS POSSIBLE BASIS FOR EJECTION FROM PARTY, THOUGH CLARK HIMSELF SOUNDED CONCILIATORY NOTE ON PARTY HARMONY IN SPEECH SUNDAY NIGHT. LASALLE OPPONENT, JEAN-YVES LORTIE, WHO HAD BEEN NOMINATED AND SUPPORTED BY MP JACQUES LAVOIE AS WELL AS WAGNER, LIKE CLARK TRIED TO SMOOTH OVER DIFFERENCES, CONGRATULATING THE WINNER, PROMISING SUPPORT, AND DECLARING THE RESULT UNANIMOUS.

5. ONE SOURCE ATTRIBUTES BASIC "WAGNER PROBLEM" TO HIS WIFE "WHO HAS NEVER FORGIVEN THE LIBERALS FOR HIS DEFEAT BY BOURASSA AND WHO WILL NEVER FORGIVE THE PC FOR NOT CHOOSING HIM LEADER EARLIER THIS YEAR."

6. BACKGROUND: RIFT CREATED WITHIN QUEBEC TORY RANKS DURING PARTY LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN LAST FEBRUARY, WHEN BOTH CLAUDE WAGNER AND BRIAN MULRONEY SOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND WAGNER SUPPORTERS FELT MULRONEY WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR WAGNER'S LOSS TO CLARK, HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT PAPERED OVER PUBLICLY BUT HAS NOT REALLY HEALED. CLARK ATTEMPTED MINIMIZE DISSENTION BY MOVING QUEBEC PRESIDENT CLAUDE DUPRAS, WHO HAD SUPPORTED MULRONEY, TO THE VICE-PRESIDENCY OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE. HE THEN PERSUADED ROCH LASALLE, WHO HAD SUPPORTED WAGNER, TO RUN IN THE QUEBEC WING ELECTION. WAGNER HAD ALREADY, HOWEVER, COMMITTED HIMSELF TO THE CANDIDACY OF JEAN-YVES LORTIE, ANOTHER LEADERSHIP SUPPORTER, WHOSE PERSONAL POLITICAL FORTUNES HAVE BEEN UP-AND-DOWN RECENTLY. LORTIE HAD BEEN NAMED CHIEF FUND-RAISER AFTER THE LEADERSHIP CONVENTION BUT WAS REMOVED FROM OFFICE BY DUPRAS A FEW MONTHS AGO ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST CHARGES. THIS IS NOW BEFORE THE COURTS. MEANWHILE, THE PARTY'S PROVINCIAL COUNCIL REBUKED THE EXECUTIVE FOR ACTING PRECIPITOUSLY AND WITHOUT PROPER CONSULTATION. IT WAS AT THAT POINT THAT CLARK MOVED DUPRAS. IT WOULD APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE SELF-DESTRUCT INSTINCT SO PROMINENT IN TORY POLITICS CANNOT READILY BE DIVERTED. HARPER

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